



The Gateway

Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin

January 2012

Thirty-Sixth Issue

Welcome

Welcome to the Chinese New Year issue of 'The Gateway'. Enter the dragon! On the 23rd January 2012 we say farewell to the Year of the Tiger and start the Lunar New Year of the Dragon. The use of animals to mark the twelve components of the lunar new year cycle originates from the Chinese calendar, dating back more than two thousand years. If you are born a dragon, you should be a very confident, powerful, occasionally fierce person. But you will always use your power for the general well-being. People born in the Year of the Dragon are usually well satisfied with their lot. A Happy New Year to you Dragons out there.



Our Brother of the Month was not born a Dragon but he would certainly align himself with the flying dragon. It is not so much that he loved to fly but that he loved machines and transportation of all kinds, from aeroplanes to cars. As a missionary Brother, Bernard Guellec was a son of France, of Vietnam and of Hong Kong.

Dragon or no Dragon, life goes on as usual in our schools. For some schools this is mid-year examination time. Others have completed the process before Christmas. One result of all this is a lull in the inter-school sports front. Games will restart with a vengeance after Chinese New Year.

A Happy New Year of the Dragon to all our readers.



Brother of the Month

Brother Bernard Guellec 1914 – 2005



“God, I speak to you tonight with a quiet and calm confidence. Your Son has taught me that you are my Father, you should not be called by a different name ... you are the Father! Father, make me what you want: here I am to do your will. O Father, I have no strength, but I have yours. I shall never insult you by being afraid or thinking that you forget about me.

And if I find the cross very heavy and cannot see the way any more, I can at least keep repeating that I believe in your love and accept your will.

Lord, here is my life; do with it what you want.

Your will is that I become more and more like you! I want to walk the same path as the one who first told me your name.”

(Father Lyonnet).

This prayer of Father Lyonnet, found in Brother Bernard’s diaries, tells us something about his very strong spiritual life.

Brother Bernard was born on March 23, 1914, in Briec de l’Odet, Finistère South, Brittany, France. At baptism, his parents gave him the name Yves Francois. He grew up happily in a deeply religious family.

On 15 April 1926, at the tender age of twelve, he had made up his mind to devote his life to teaching the young. As he says himself: “When I was still very young, I was already thinking of missionary life. A cousin, who was already a Brother of the Christian Schools, brought me to the Juniorate of the Brothers in Quimper, France.”

Four years later he was sent to Lembecq-Les-Hal in Belgium and took the Habit of the Brothers. He was given the name Calixtus Bernard and completed the spiritual year of the Novitiate with fervour. From 1931 to 1936, as a very young man in Belgium, he learned his craft as an educator and teacher at the Brothers houses of formation in Lembecq.

His desire for missionary life was fulfilled when he was chosen for the Lasallian missions in the Far East. December 1936 saw Brother Bernard’s arrival in Saigon, Vietnam, his new found land, where he would stay the best part of 30 years. In all, his long missionary life in the East would span over 60 years.



At first he was sent as a student of the Vietnamese language to the ancient capital of Hue in central Vietnam. There he studied in the local seminary. In August 1937 he returned to Saigon as a teacher at the famous Taberd Institution where many Brothers spread the Lasallian charism over the years. Apart from a spell of military service and a vacation home, he was to spend the next 15 years teaching at the Taberd school.

On 15 February, 1940, and as a French national, he was drafted into the Coast Artillery. It was there that he learned about aviation. He tells us about his training:

“I have about 25 hours of solo flying under my belt. I even did a 20-minute spell of loops, reversals and tricks of all kinds. That was my happiest moment, a treat that I shall remember all my life.”

Demobilization came in 1941. But Brother Bernard kept up his taste for flying all his life. A few years before his death he was to be found under the hot sun at the Paris Air Show!

We are fortunate that Brother Bernard kept diaries, and we are thus able to tell much of his story in his own words. He begins with the war years:

“During the lead-up to the war years, I worked in Taberd. In mid-August 1941, the Japanese army settles in Cochin China, South Vietnam. In December, the Japanese government requisitions Taberd, then requisitions a part of the Major Seminary and builds classroom accommodation for us along Norodom Boulevard. And life goes on until the first bombing of Cochin China in April and May 1944. So we retreat to Saint

Joseph of Mytho by the Mekong river. At the beginning of September 1944, we run only classes for day pupils in Taberd. Air attacks continue and increase in intensity from 12 January, 1945, which we spend in the trenches, to February 7. Fortunately it is the Tet New Year when our district is most affected (school holiday time). All schools are closed for the second time and I find myself again in Mytho. On 9 March, 1945, the Japanese attack. However the lessons run up to the Easter holidays. The French were confined to the big cities. In the south, they are Saigon, Dalat and Phnom Penh. Priests, Brothers and Sisters - considered citizens of the Vatican - may remain on the spot. With 3 other European Brothers I am promoted to "unemployed" for the first time in my life! "

Brother Bernard's first home leave was from 1948 to 1949. He took the opportunity to practise his Spanish by going to Valladolid. He then takes up the thread of the story:

"On my return, I continue to teach in Saigon until July 1952 when I go to Dalat, for one year only. Then come four years of Directorship in Thuduc - 13 km from Saigon - another year in Dalat, and in 1958-1959, second home leave and nine months in Rome Upon returning to the Far East, I take the reins of the school Mossard of Thuduc for 6 years.

In October 1965, I am assigned to our school in Phnom Penh. All goes well until March 1970, the date of the coup d'état by General Lon Nol. On Sunday 12 April, Michel school is closed by the Cambodian government. And for three months, the Brothers of the Miche school are available to the Department of Aid for Vietnamese interned by Lon Nol – a service improvised and adapted slowly to the needs of these unfortunate people. Using the school car, I drive volunteers and relief workers here and there.



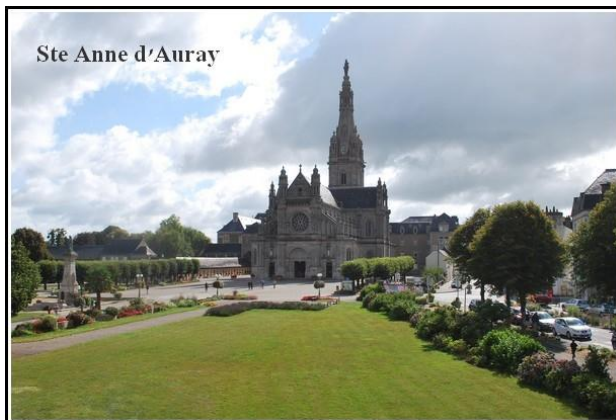
In late June, 1970, along with returning refugees, I go to Hong Kong for the first time. Brother Director of "La Salle College" is an old friend going back to our formative years in Belgium (1930 -1931) and to the war years (1942 -1946). I stay in the British colony until after Christmas and return to Saigon for a

week. On 2 January 1971, I arrive in Vientiane (Laos), because I was assigned to the Paksane seminary (153 km downstream of Vientiane on the Mekong). At the beginning of September 1971, I reach Paksane where the Mazenod Institution, the

official name of the minor seminary run by the Oblate Fathers, operates. I work with them until the Communist takeover of the country (Pathet-Lao) in May 1975. As a consequence, the Mazenod Institution is closed and students sent home. Now that I am out of work, and instead of returning home, I opt for Hong Kong, reaching there on June 18, 1975.

With the ease of flying, returning to Europe is becoming more common and I go for home leave every two years during the summer vacation months. In 1984 - unusually - I am appointed to represent the Brothers of Hong Kong at the canonization of the Ecuadorian Brother, Brother Miguel Cordero, after which I go to Brittany until 28 December, returning in time to avoid the great cold wave in Europe a week later.

Twice, in 1981 and 1986, instead of going to Europe, I opt for the South Seas, that is to say, for New Caledonia, which has been in the news so much since 1984. On this island, 15000 square kilometres, roughly twice the size of Corsica, we run a school in Thio, the first mining centre on the east coast. In Noumea, the Brothers have a place to stay where at least two religious reside permanently. During the southern winter (our summer), the climate reminded me of Dalat in Vietnam. If things go well in New Caledonia, I shall gladly return when I have retired.



The long leave, from 8 August 1987 to 1 July 1988, was spent mainly in Brittany and, to be precise, in the community at Auray. I had a five-month stay in this house, with comings and goings here and there. For the first time I went to Ireland to greet the old Brothers of Hong Kong retired there.

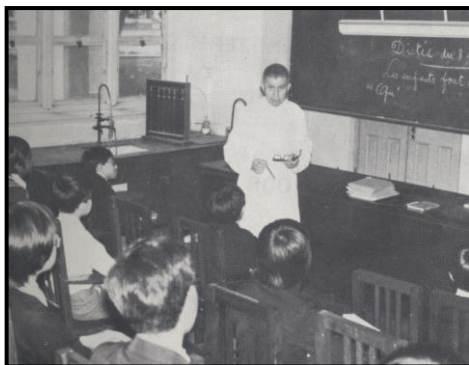
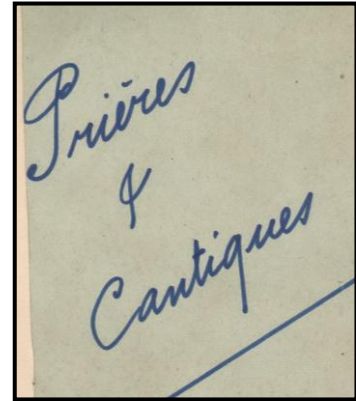
Finally, in Rome, I had the pleasure of attending the canonization of the Martyrs of Vietnam. Grand and fervent ceremonies had been arranged to cater to nearly 15,000 faithful Vietnamese coming mainly from the USA and various European countries. This was a unique opportunity to see the faces of friends lost for a good fifteen years.

On 1 July 1988, I return to Hong Kong in the midst of a summer heat wave (27° - 33°) tempered by a breeze during the day. Classes resume on 1 September and immediately the College finds its cruising speed. Christmas, the end of the first term, is at our door. There are Public Holidays for everyone, but schools take one or two

weeks vacation. In early February, the 6th, I believe, there is further leave during the Lunar New Year.”

Here is a quick overview of a half-century - or nearly so - which ranges from 1939 to 1988. We have grown older.”

Brother Bernard, with one or two minor excursions, remained in La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong, until August 1998. He was not one to retire easily and contributed much at both community and school levels. Every morning he would faithfully drive the community car to fetch the priest for Mass. Indeed, his faithfulness to his prayer and religious exercises was exemplary. He would always be one of the first to church and often meditated privately. He had a particular devotion to Our Lady, something that had been nourished in him from childhood. He would also fast from food twice a week. Although he maintained this was good for his health, we tended to think that he also did this from spiritual motives. Since he lived to be 94 years old, he might have been right.



In school he was a tower of strength to the French Department as well as to the Library and Study Room. He would take over the first 10 to 15 minutes or so of regular French lessons and teach the boys something about French culture and language. He also taught the boys French songs. He had made out his own exercise books of Prayers and Hymns, Popular Songs and Poems, which he would distribute to each student. He was a good singer and the teacher of French as well as the students really appreciated his contribution because it is very rare to find a French person to teach these things in Hong Kong.

The Brothers would also get him to sing French songs on special occasions. He had a love for music, especially for classical and organ music.

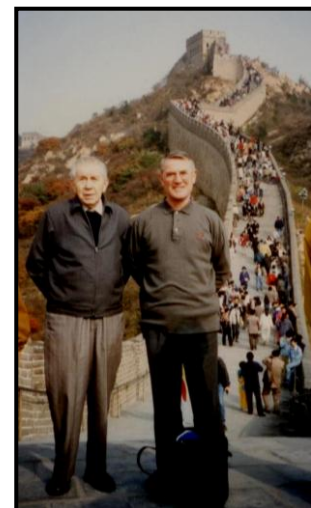
Another sphere of activity was helping out in the school Library and in particular supervising the adjoining Study Room. Under his kind but firm gaze the boys settled quickly to their tasks. Every day at lunchtime he could be seen in his white robe watching over his charges. Not a glamorous job perhaps, but certainly a useful one. Brother Bernard was fascinated by all modes of transportation and by “speed”. The

construction and operation of roads, railways, bridges, trains, aeroplanes and so on were grist to his mill. No wonder the College Library was well supplied with aviation magazines and journals. The proximity of the College to the former airport at Kai Tak was a boon to Brother Bernard. His idea of enjoying a Sunday afternoon was to head for the observation deck of the airport and watch the comings and goings of the planes.



When the new airport was under construction, nothing would suit Brother Bernard but a construction site visit. Various permissions were eventually obtained and the visit came about, much to Brother's delight. When we arrived, most of us just saw a very large construction site. Brother Bernard, however, was doubtless able to picture the whole process and the end product in his mind. He was in his element.

Another visit, of a somewhat different sort, was to Beijing. Four Brothers, five teachers and seven old boys and their wives made the visit in 1996. Besides visiting a secondary school as well as Beijing University, the group made the usual sightseeing stops. Brother Bernard, as expected, was fascinated by the processes involved in the construction of the Great Wall. He himself managed to climb as far as the 4th Tower. As the elder statesman of the group, he was deemed to be a hero!



Time was moving on and, although in relatively good health, Brother Bernard began to think of his final retirement years. He made up his mind to return to the country and place of his birth, Brittany in France. In March 1998, he transferred from the Sub-District District of Hong Kong to the District of France, to Kérozer, Saint Avé. He settled into a home there for the aged Brothers who needed care. There he devoted much of his time to helping the more dependent Brothers.

But he retained his passion for planes and trains! Attendance at the Salon du Bourget (Paris Air Show) and his rail magazine subscription show us this passion for machines! In 1982-1983 he marvelled at the Japanese new train, the "Shinkansen", speed 210 km/h and then the French TGV, in 1983, which made 250 km / h on the Paris to Lyon route.

“I waited for the departure of the TGV with barely disguised impatience, eager to test it, to experience emotions while rolling at high speed.”

Brother Bernard never forgot his Breton roots. He kept in close touch with his family, either by frequent correspondence or by home visits.



His general health had all the time been pretty good...perhaps because he fasted twice a week! The Brothers and staff of the home at Kerozer were devoted to his welfare in the final few months. Age could not be denied, however, and he died peacefully on the

17th September 2005, aged 92 and in the 74th year of his religious life.

We close with the words of the Bishop of Xuan Loc, President of the Episcopal Conference of Vietnam:

“To characterize the attitude of the Vietnamese people, three words are needed:

Faith, zeal, perseverance. I have great admiration for my fellow Christians in Vietnam. They are strong, brave and cheerful. They have shown courage, strength and loyalty.”

Brother Bernard must have become at least partly Vietnamese because these qualities applied very well to him. With thanksgiving, we pray in his own words:

“Lord, do not allow me to become one of these old grumpies, always groaning, grumbling, denigrating ...

*Let me smile and laugh and keep my sense of humour.
In your goodness grant me eternal life in your kingdom.”*

Another apt saying of Bro. Bernard was:

Avant l’heure, ce n’est pas l’heure
Après l’heure, ce n’est plus l’heure
Before time, it is not time
After time, it is no longer time.

Here is a piece written by a confrere shortly after Brother Bernard's death.

To Yves,

*Time meant time.
Metronomic precision,
Signaling his passion
For planes, trains,
And things that went clickety-clack,
Which, to qualify, must be smack
On.*

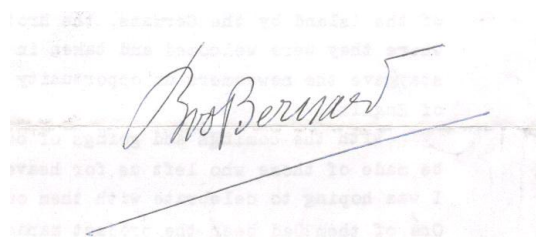
*His trains and planes ran true to time,
His meals and work and sleep;
But most of all when chapel called,
He would his vigil keep.*

*Thus life was spent,
As it was meant,
In purposeful intent.*

*And as he waited for the train-
The last one on the line-
It took him to his journey's end,
Where he would sumptuous dine.*

Postings of Brother Bernard

Quimper, Brittany, France	Juniorate	1926-1931
Lembecq-Les-Hal, Belgium	Novitiate	1931-1932
Lembecq-Les-Hal, Belgium	Scholasticate	1932-1936
Hue, Vietnam	Studies	1936-1937
Taberd Institution, Saigon	Teaching	1937-1940
Coast Guard Artillery, Saigon	Military Service	1940-1941
Taberd Institution, Saigon	Teaching	1941-1952
Dalat, Vietnam	Teaching	1952-1953
Thuduc, Vietnam	Director	1953-1957
Dalat, Vietnam	Teaching	1957-1958
Rome, Italy	Second Novitiate	1958-1959
Thuduc, Vietnam	Principal	1959-1965
St. Michael's, Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Teaching	1965-1970
Seminary, Laos	Teaching	1971-1975
La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong	Teaching	1975-1998
Retreat House, St. Ave, Kerozer, Brittany, France	Retirement	1998-2005



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Bro Bernard', written over a horizontal line. The signature is in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Family Updates

Lasallian Formation

Brother Jeffrey Chan continues to animate students in Lasallian formation in our various schools.

His most recent venture was a one hour presentation to the Form 3 students of Chong Gene Hang College. First, he introduced himself as a Brother, then showed a short video on St La Salle our



Founder and rounded off training the boys to sing "We are Lasallian". Of course the whole presentation was conducted in the Cantonese language!

Principals' Conference

The latest Lasallian Principals' Conference was held on the 10th of January 2012. Brother Visitor, Edmundo Fernandez, opened the proceedings and encouraged the Principals to carry on the good work of human and Christian education to the young people confided to their care. The main topic of discussion was the gradual preparation for the new governance structure in schools, called the Incorporated Management Committees (IMC). With the help of the Hong Kong Lasallian Education Council, our schools will prepare a common draft constitution which will be the blueprint for planning the way forward.



Gathering at St Joseph's

It is the custom among the Brothers for the Brother Visitor to make an annual visitation to each Community, and, as far as possible, to each school. Brother Visitor, Edmundo Fernandez, rounded off his visit to the Brothers of the Hong Kong Sector with an invitation to dinner at St Joseph's College Community on the 12th January 2012. It was a very fraternal gathering and enjoyed by all.



Talent Showcase

La Salle Primary School pulled out all the stops when talent-showcasing their students on the nights of the 13th, 14th and 15th January 2012. The stage was set for 4 musical dramas, in English, Chinese and Mandarin. The entire production, music, scripts, costumes and make-up were 'homemade' by teachers and parents. The performers, ranging from Primary 1 to Primary 6 students, looked and acted like professionals. And it looked like about 500 were involved. The shows played to full houses on all three nights.



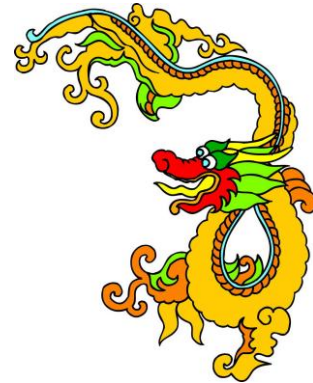
Oriental Flavour

The Dragons 龍

Our images of dragons might fit into one or all of the following:



- Fire-spewing monsters
- Ferocious beasts
- Scaly serpents
- Winged or feathered serpents
- Large-eyed reptiles



In the West dragons tend to be seen as symbols of evil and violence. In the East, however, particularly in China, Japan, Korea and other East Asian countries, they are viewed as magical, wise and generally benevolent.



The Chinese associate dragons with wisdom and longevity and beauty, with magic, supernatural power and heroism. Temples and shrines are built in their honour. As a race, the Chinese are sometimes referred to as 'descendants of the dragon 龍的傳人' and the Emperor sat on the dragon throne, a symbol of power.

One of the twelve Chinese zodiac signs is of the dragon. It happens to fall this year. People born in the Year of the Dragon will be healthy, wealthy and wise. No wonder there is a surge of babies born in the year of the dragon. And also a surge in the number of weddings. In fact, the year is expected to be a prosperous one for all. This is surely good news in these economically challenging times!

One surviving tradition in connection with the dragon is that of the ‘Dragon Dance’. This dance is performed at ceremonial as well as joyous occasions, including school anniversaries or big celebrations. Making the dragon dance is a tough but joyful task for the dancers.

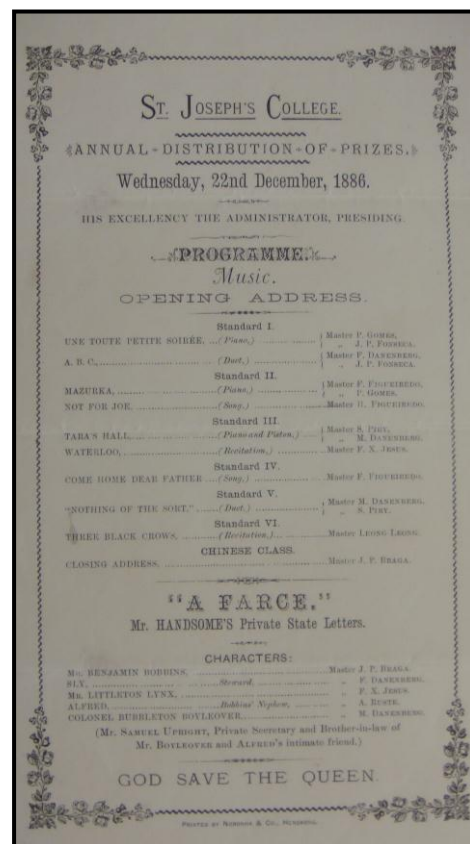
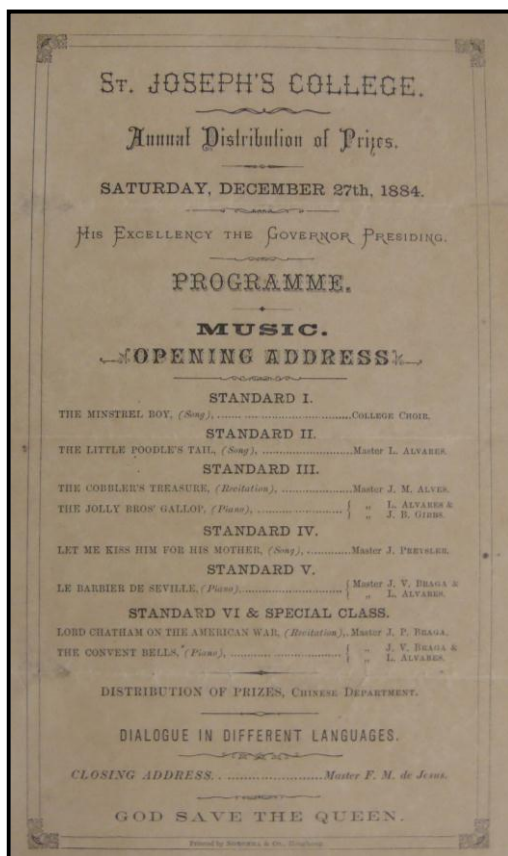
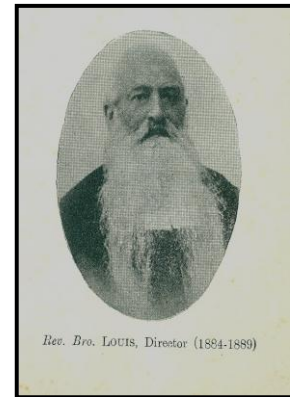


Here in Hong Kong, we have our own ‘local’ airline called ‘Dragonair’. Stamps have been produced for the Year of the Dragon. The design has stirred up quite a bit of controversy, some people claiming it projects China as a dominant, powerful race and country. Perhaps you can make your own assessment.



Colonial Blasts from the Past

St. Joseph's College goes back a long way. Amazingly, two programmes of its annual distribution of prizes way back in the 1880s have survived. They give a whiff not only of school life at the time but also of colonial times past. Presiding over the 1884 ceremony was the Governor, Sir George Bowen, while the Administrator, Sir William Henry Marsh, presided in 1886. The Director of the College was Brother Louis Gaubert who hailed from France. We notice that the Irish and French flavour of the Brothers was not overlooked in the prize-giving programmes.



At the time, Standard 1 was the equivalent of Form 6 while Standard 6 was the equivalent of Form 1. Many of the student performers mentioned in the programmes were later to become prominent citizens of Hong Kong. It is also clear from the names that in those early years many of the students were of Portuguese descent.

How times have changed. Today's Speech Day and Prize-giving ceremonies ring to the strains of the Chinese national anthem 義勇軍進行曲, instead of 'God Save the Queen'.

Issue	Date	Brother of the Month/Special Features
Gateway 1	March 2008	Brendan Dunne
Gateway 2	April 2008	Paul O'Connell
Gateway 3	May 2008	Aimar Sauron
Gateway 4	June 2008	Raphael Egan
Gateway 5	August 2008	Casimir Husarik
Gateway 6	September 2008	James Dooley
Gateway 7	October 2008	Cassian Brigant
Gateway 8	November 2008	Michael Curtin
Gateway 9	December 2008	APLEC 7
Gateway 10	January 2009	Eugene Sharkey
Gateway 11	February 2009	Manila Massacre
Gateway 12	March 2009	Paul Sun
Gateway 13	April 2009	John Lynam
Gateway 14	May 2009	Henry Pang
Gateway 15	June 2009	Felix Sheehan
Gateway 16	August 2009	Meldan Treanor
Gateway 17	September 2009	Patricius O'Donovan
Gateway 18	October 2009	Gilbert Perrier
Gateway 19	November 2009	Cronan Curran
Gateway 20	January 2010	Pius Kelly
Gateway 21	February 2010	Anthony Cheung
Gateway 22	April 2010	Visit of Superior General and Councillor
Gateway 23	May 2010	Hidulphe Marie and Cyprian Gendreau
Gateway 24	June 2010	Anthony Knoll
Gateway 25	September 2010	Fridolin Gaughran
Gateway 26	October 2010	Lawrence Kelly
Gateway 27	December 2010	Hubert Pilz
Gateway 28	January 2011	Patrick Toner
Gateway 29	March 2011	Martin Kelleher
Gateway 30	April 2011	Vincent Kozak
Gateway 31	May 2011	Austin de Lemos
Gateway 32	July 2011	William Muir
Gateway 33	September 2011	Matthias Linehan
Gateway 34	October 2011	Wilfrid More
Gateway 35	December 2011	APLEC 8
Gateway 36	January 2012	Bernard Guellec
Link		http://www.lasalle.org.hk/pages/gateway.htm